

## ***Mousetrap deaths now top workplace killer***

Recent studies by safety agencies make grim reading for forklift operators. Tipping accidents are confirmed as one of the biggest causes of fatal accidents in the workplace. In almost all of these cases, the driver was 'mousetrapped' between the forklift and the ground, causing massive trauma to the head or upper body.

### **Belt up or get cut up**

In car driving, the seatbelt system was introduced to restrain the driver in a high speed collision – preventing him or her from hitting the steering wheel or windscreen. So why do forklifts have a seatbelt... surely their speeds are much lower?

Seatbelts in forklifts are designed to prevent drivers sliding from the seat in an upward and outward direction, as doing so increases the risk of an operator having his head trapped or crushed between the overhead guard and the floor.

Coroners' Inquests hear ever more tragic and gruesome cases of how, as a forklift starts to tip over, the human brain makes the operator try and get out of the forklift. And how, in trying to save themselves in this way, they often die. The operator is 'mousetrapped' between the overhead guard and the ground with fearful injuries.

Studies have shown that the urge to jump is so irresistible that the best safety precaution of all is to wear a seatbelt – to stop the operator jumping out!

### **Why forklifts fall**

There are many situations that can lead up to a tipping incident, but in all cases the forklift's stability has been compromised by poor driving and poor understanding of the basic principles of forklift stability. The factors that compromise the stability of your forklift are high travel speed, high lift height, turning sharply, harsh breaking and operating the forklift on uneven or sloping surface

### **No load, no danger?**

Driving without a load is not a guarantee against a forklift overturning. When travelling without a load the combined centre of gravity moves to the rear increasing the risk of tip over. And this is frequently seen when joyriding in an unloaded forklift. Forklifts are designed for manoeuvrability and pulling power – not performing sharp turns at speed or harsh braking.

### **How to survive the mousetrap**

Always buckle your seatbelt and obey the safety information in the operator's manual.

#### **In case of a tip over:**

- Stay on the forklift
- Hold on firmly
- Brace both feet
- Lean away from the point of impact



*Information for this article was sourced from the Mitsubishi Forklift Briefing: [news.forkliftbriefing.com](http://news.forkliftbriefing.com)*